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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Gaza Operation

Key stories in the media:

Most media led with a case of Qfriendly fireQ in Gaza last night:
Three IDF soldiers were killed and 23 were wounded, one critically,
by a tank shell. Electronic media reported that an IDF officer was
also killed by friendly fire in the northern Gaza Strip, near Beit
Hanun. It is estimated that nearly one hundred Palestinians died in

clashes yesterday.

HaQaretz and other media reported that yesterday Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told a delegation of European foreign ministers in a closed conversation that Hamas must not be allowed to win its conflict with the IDF. The comment occurred even as Hamas, for the first time since the fighting began, sent representatives to Cairo to discuss a cease-fire. Following a meeting with Egyptian intelligence officials, Hamas officials said they had received an Egyptian proposal and would consider it. HaQaretz wrote that the Egyptian cease-fire proposal would require Israel to end its military operation and withdraw from Gaza, while Hamas would have to end rocket fire into Israel. The border crossings into Gaza would reopen, but PA officials would be stationed at the Rafah crossing with Egypt.

PM Ehud Olmert told French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who was visiting Jerusalem, that Israel would not honor a cease-fire imposed by the UN Security Council without its consent. Arab states are currently pushing for a Security Council resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire. Sarkozy, who also met with President Shimon Peres and PA President Mahmoud Abbas, was here to push France's proposal for a 48-hour "humanitarian" cease-fire, during which negotiations on a permanent cease-fire would begin. However, Olmert, DM Ehud Barak and FM Tzipi Livni agreed yesterday that for now, the diplomatic efforts should proceed in parallel with the ongoing ground operation in the Gaza Strip. HaQaretz reported that Israel is mainly pinning its hopes on the U.S. and France to thwart the Arab effort in the Security Council. However, it has sent messages to several Security Council members informing them that Israel will not accept an imposed cease-fire, and especially that it will not accept any resolution that places Israel and Hamas on the same level by calling for both to cease their fire impartially. The Jerusalem Post reported that EU leaders arrived without a concrete proposal to stop the fighting and quoted diplomatic official as saying that the meetings were intended to give Europeans a sense that their leaders are involved, while the Qdiplomatic heavy liftingQ is happening elsewhereQ (in Cairo) . The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Ulrich Wilhelm, the spokesman of German Chancellor Angela Merkel reiterated the position of her government: A sustained cease-fire is only possible when IsraelQs security can be ensured.

HaQaretz quoted Turkish Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin as saying in Antalya, Turkey, on Saturday that "Israel is the world's greatest terrorist provocateur. The war on terror cannot succeed as long as Israel continues its provocations." He was followed on Sunday by Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who, during a visit to Saudi Arabia, blamed Israel for the outbreak of fighting. "Hamas observed the truce for six months, but Israel did not honor the agreement to lift the embargo on Gaza," he said. "People in Gaza live in a sort of prison. Essentially, all of Palestine is a prison." The Jerusalem Post reported that ErdoganQs QtoxicQ comments on Sunday that IsraelQs actions in Gaza would lead to punishment from Allah and IsraelQs Qself-destructionQ drew a protest from the Foreign Ministry, which told TurkeyQs ambassador to Israel that these words were QunacceptableQ among friendly nations.

HaQaretz quoted Jordanian Prime Minister Nader Dahabi as saying on Sunday that Jordan was liable to reconsider its relations with Israel in light of the Gaza operation. The Jerusalem Post reported that Jordan and Egypt are striking a delicate balance between ties with Israel and their angry publics. The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that Israel was looking into -- but could not confirm -- reports that Mauritania is recalling its ambassador from Israel in response to the Gaza operation.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday DM Barak and other security officials warned the KnessetQs Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that there were many challenges ahead before Operation Cast Lead could be concluded. Maariv reported that yesterday Brig. Gen. Yossi Baidatz, the head of IDF Intelligence's research department, told the committee that Hamas has enough missiles and rockets for a month.

Yediot and other media reported on the plight of several Gazan families that have lost multiple members in since the operation began.

The Jerusalem Post quoted the IDF as saying yesterday that security threats are keeping foreign journalists out of Gaza. The Foreign Press Association, which represents foreign journalists in Israel and the Palestinian territories, suggested that Israel was mixing genuine security concerns and games. Leading media reported that an Arab reporter from East Jerusalem who works for an Iranian TV channel and his producer were arrested by police over suspicions that he violated a censorship decree and reported on the entrance of IDF ground forces into Gaza, hours before the media were permitted to mention the ground operation.

Major media reported on growing tension along the Israel-Lebanon border. Israel Radio said that some Lebanese leaders are trying to cool the atmosphere.

HaQaretz reported that 530 people have been arrested in anti-war demonstrations in Israel.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that for the first time the World Movement of Conservative Judaism has appealed to President Bush to consider pardoning convicted spy Jonathan Pollard.

Leading media reported on President-elect Barack Obama's appointment of Leon Panetta as CIA Director. Media noted that he has no military background.

Gaza Operation:

Summary:

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QThe solution for the day after [the military operation] is not a Qstate of calmQ that Hamas can violate whenever it sees fit, but a full cease-fire with international teeth and a mechanism for halting weapons-smuggling into Gaza.

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QThe Israeli message to the United States has been translated into direct and firm American pressure on the Egyptian government. There are other political axes of activity, but that is the decisive axis at present.

Prominent liberal author A. B. Yehoshua wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Ma'ariv: Q[After the operation] we will know that we are not continuing to fight for a goal that is impossible and would only bring more blood and destruction which will weigh on the memory of the children of our neighbors that will never leave.

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in Yediot Aharonot: QThe Israeli perception whereby a Hamas that is defeated on the battlefield ... will be subjugated, submissive and very interested in an extended truce on terms that Israel dictates -- is not based on fact.

Conservative columnist and Jewish affairs writer Nadav Shragai opined in HaQaretz: QIf fate has decreed that this is the team that is now leading us into war, the minimum we can ask from it is to bury plans that would lead us to similar catastrophes in other places and to focus on a single mission: eradicating Hamas and removing the threat hanging over the people of Israel.

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QTurkey needs to choose between bridging the gap between East and West and flacking for the kind of dead-end Islamist policies championed by Iran, Hizbullah and Hamas -- policies that threaten to destabilize the entire region.

Block Quotes:

II. "Reflections on the Day After"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (1/6): QWhile we would love Hamas to disappear, that is not very likely. With the entry of our ground forces, we have bisected the Gaza Strip, but no matter what we once thought, we cannot rely on military might alone. The crisis is not going to blow over without international intervention. A local agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is not going to do the trick. Same goes for the Hamas proposal to go back to a truce that isn't worth the paper it's written on.... The solution for the day after is not a Qstate of calmQ that Hamas can violate whenever it sees fit, but a full cease-fire with international teeth and a mechanism for halting weapons-smuggling into Gaza. We will not go back to the way things were before. Hamas needs its wings clipped and must be brought to its knees in an imposed accord, but no agreement will be complete without provisions for the release of Gilad Shalit.

II. "Wanted: Victory"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (1/6): QThe dilemma [of the three principal Israeli cabinet members] might best be described as follows: they feel that they have to be able to present at the end of this operation an achievement of which they can be proud. Otherwise the operation won't end with a sense of victory. An achievement of that sort is supposed to be the product of either the ground activity, the diplomatic activity, or a combination of the two. If there is no such achievement, they fear, the deterring effect in whose name Israel launched this operation will not be achieved. The catch is that the more Israel expands its ground operation, the more its soldiers become vulnerable. Casualties immediately have an impact on the sense of victory. That is what Barak said on the eve of the operation with respect to the relations between cost and gain. The international activity is being pursued mainly by means of the American channel. Israel has made it clear to the United States that it will not stop its ground offensive in Gaza until the Egyptians undertake to change the situation along Philadelphi Road. The Israeli message to the United States has been translated into direct and firm American pressure on the Egyptian government. There are other political axes of activity, but that is the decisive axis at present. The danger at this stage is that the operation might lead Israel into making mistakes that have worked to its detriment in the past -- first of all, the expansion of a limited operation into an expanded operation only because of inertia. The illusion is that what hasn't been achieved by force might still be achieved by greater force.

III. "Neighbors, after All"

Prominent liberal author A. B. Yehoshua wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (1/6): QWe must not forget one basic and substantive thing if we wish to live in the long term. Gaza is not Vietnam, nor is it Iraq or Afghanistan, Gaza is not even Lebanon. Gaza is part of the common homeland we share with the Palestinians, a homeland that we call the Land of Israel, and they call Palestine.... These Gazans are first and foremost neighbors, and will also be neighbors in the future, and we must therefore be very careful in the type, quality, intensity, and scope of the war we are now waging against them. There is no chance of uprooting the Hamas regime from Gaza, just as there was no chance of uprooting the PLO from the Palestinian people.... We must realize that the Arabs are not metaphysical creatures, but rather human creatures, and people change. We too are changing; we are shifting positions and relaxing positions and opening up to new ideas. We should therefore, as soon as possible, shrug off the false illusion of destroying Hamas and uprooting it from Gaza, and work cautiously and wisely by means of a good and thorough agreement on a quick cease-fire to effect change in Hamas--this is possible and it can be done, and it has happened in the course of human history time and again. Even if we begin to work seriously, from today, on a cease-fire agreement, some difficult days of war and missiles still await us and them, but at least we will know that we are not continuing to fight for a goal that is impossible and would only bring more blood and destruction which will weigh on the memory of the children of our neighbors that will never leave.

IV. QHamas and the Doctrine of Perpetual Revolution

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in Yediot Aharonot (1/6): QHamas challenged the Camp David accords between Israel and the PLO and caused them to be paralyzed and collapse. It launched a wave of suicide terror in 1993 and then again in 2001. Its suicide bombers changed the political map in Israel and in Palestine.... The Israeli perception whereby a Hamas that is defeated on the battlefield -- and it will be defeated in Operation Cast Lead, just as it was militarily defeated in the past -- will be subjugated, submissive, and very interested in an extended truce on Israel-dictate terms -- is not based on fact. In light of Hamas's acts up until now, we at least should examine another possibility, whereby Hamas does not want any sort of stable agreement with Israel, even at the price of temporarily losing administrative control of the Gaza Strip -- even at the price of expulsion from Gaza. At any price.... Hamas's belligerent behavior has now led to a pan-Arab front being formed against it to which Israel is a party. This front is scared of Hamas, it considers it the disaster of the Palestinian national movement, and wants to get rid of its inflammatory presence, its fanatic ideas, its never-ending belligerence. It may succeed in this, it may be that all is not lost. And it may already be lost.

IV. "How We Got Here"

Conservative columnist and Jewish affairs writer Nadav Shragai opined in HaQaretz (1/6): Q[A] reminder of the colossal failure known as the QdisengagementQ is necessary because, absurdly, there are those who would use the results of the war against Hamas to promote additional uprootings and withdrawals in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank].... Kadima, Labor, and even Likud have not thoroughly taken to heart the main lesson of the Oslo Accords and the Gaza disengagement: that not even the slightest fragment of our security can be given into Palestinian hands, not to Hamas, and not even to the Palestinian Authority, whose future is in grave doubt. They were also a full partner during many different periods of terror against us and their interest in peace is conditioned upon the constant erosion of our vital interests.... If fate has decreed that this is the team that is now leading us into war, the minimum we can ask from it is to bury plans that would lead us to similar catastrophes in other places and to focus on a single mission: eradicating Hamas and removing the threat hanging over the people of Israel.

VI. QTurkey Chooses Sides

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (1/6): QIsrael's founders had high hopes that the Jewish state, isolated in a sea of Arab hostility, could align itself informally with Iran and Turkey -- Muslim countries which had their own differences with the Arabs.... Since the IDF began hitting back at Hamas in Operation Cast Lead, both the government and people of Turkey have lined up behind the Islamists.... The human tragedy in Gaza, it transpires [from comments made this week by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan], is entirely Israel's fault: QHamas abided by the truce. But Israel failed to lift embargoes. In Gaza, people seem to live in an open prison. In fact, all Palestine looks like an open prison Turkish President Abdullah Gul adds: QWhat Israel has done is nothing but atrocity.Q Erdogan can find absolutely nothing wrong with anything Hamas has done since it grabbed power in Gaza.... On balance, we're not convinced that Turkey has earned the right to lecture Israelis about human rights. While world attention focuses on Gaza, Turkish jets have bombed Kurdish positions in northern Iraq. Over the years, tens of thousands of people have been killed as the radical PKK pursues its campaign for autonomy from Turkey. Kurdish civilians in Iraq complain regularly that Ankara's air force has struck civilian areas where there is no PKK activity. The next Israeli government should weigh whether Israel can accept as a mediator a country that speaks, albeit elliptically, of our destruction. Meanwhile, if Turkey persists in its one-sided, anti-Israel rhetoric, the Foreign Ministry might consider recalling our ambassador in Ankara for consultations. Turkey needs to choose between bridging the gap between East and West and flacking for the kind of dead-end Islamist policies championed by Iran, Hizbulah and Hamas -- policies that threaten to destabilize the entire region.